FBI investigating former Navy SEAL, improvised explosive tossed at Portland protesters

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Protester confirms she gave unexploded device to federal agents.

The FBI has joined the Portland Police Bureau's investigation into explosive devices that detonated in a park in Southeast Portland early on Aug. 8.

While no one was injured, a former U.S. Navy SEAL and CIA contractor who has boasted on social media about infiltrating "ANTIFA" was filmed leaving the scene. Law enforcement officials have confirmed that person is Louis Garrick Fernbaugh but said no eye witnesses have come forward connecting Fernbaugh to the immediate scene where the explosives were thrown.

"We know that that's Garrick Fernbaugh that was in the area," said a PPB official familiar with the investigation. "We do not have any photographs, video, or anything of him throwing the explosive device. We cannot move forward until we have someone in person talk to us, or at least identify themselves positively, give us a witness account of this."

A photo of an improvised explosive device allegedly thrown at protesters Aug. 8, 2020 in Laurelhurst Park.

whatriot.com

The PPB official said in addition to eye witness accounts, they are also pursuing forensic leads to try to connect Fernbaugh to the explosive devices.

"There's a two-prong approach: the forensic approach and direct witness information. Ideally, we would have both, that's the perfect case," the PPB official said. "Realistically, it's hard to get both so we hope for one or the other. Everything is going to be done forensically to try to tie the suspect to the device."

A PPB spokesperson confirmed that investigators have spoken with Fernbaugh and that he has not been cleared. Fernbaugh told Task & Purpose, a military- and veteran-focused media outlet, that he did not throw any devices, but confirmed he was there that night conducting "reconnaissance."

"I can confirm the reporting from the Portland Police Bureau that we've been asked to assist on this case and we're providing what assistance we can appropriate with federal statutes and legal guidelines," FBI Portland Special Agent in Charge Renn Cannon told OPB in an interview Wednesday.

Cannon wouldn't say whether the FBI had spoken to Fernbaugh.

Last Monday, eyewitness Shauna Snider came forward and gave the FBI one of the unexploded devices thrown near her and others at Laurelhurst Park on Aug. 8. At least two other small devices exploded in the park. No one was hurt in the incident.

Snider said FBI agents asked her why she didn't call Portland police right away.

"It would be pretty absurd to ask 30 people who have just been beaten and rushed out by cops to call cops for help," Snider said she told the agents. "Also, the cops did show up. They came onto Ankeny [Street] and waited on top of the hill with their headlights off, and all of us were really sketched out."

Snider said she believed police were in the area, "aware of the bombs, and didn't come out."

PPB is also investigating reports of another explosive that was thrown at protesters downtown on Aug. 15. In a video posted online, a black SUV is seen speeding away from the area just before an explosion goes off.

In both cases, law enforcement officials have told OPB one of their main challenges is finding cooperating witnesses among people who have been protesting police for the past two and a half months.

In a press release Tuesday, Portland police confirmed the FBI is investigating the Laurelhurst Park case. They also confirmed that Fernbaugh remains a suspect.

"Mr. Fernbaugh is represented by an attorney and is not making any statement at this time," Portland police said in its press release.

PPB declined to answer questions from OPB prior to making the press statement.

Reached not long after the bombing via a Twitter account, Fernbaugh provided a statement to OPB that criticized initial reporting about his proximity to the bombing incident. He claimed without evidence that the device exploded "approximately 3 hours" before he was filmed on a street near the park carrying a military helmet with night vision goggles.

"Whatever it was that exploded, was clearly not a pipe bomb, that much is clear. No injuries and so on," Fernbaugh wrote via a Twitter message. "Report the inconsistencies in the timeline and the fact that ANTIFA has been violently attacking the police with fireworks so powerful, they can't be distinguished between the Flash-bangs the police are throwing and the fireworks ANTIFA is throwing back!"

Fernbaugh also did not deny to OPB that he was present that night, calling his presence on film in the area a "random encounter."

"When someone gives ANTIFA a dose of their own medicine, they run to the police for protection," he said in the Twitter message. "Isn't that a direct contradiction?"

Fernbaugh deleted his Twitter account after providing his statement and has not responded to requests for comment from OPB.

Kim Freda contributed to this story.